

Towns of Ashland / Holliston / Medway / Millis

Community Innovation Challenge Grant for Electronic Weights and  
Measures Inspections



April 2014

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## Introductory Letter



Mr. Glen Shor  
Secretary Administration and Finance  
Executive Office of Administration and Finance  
State House  
Room 373  
Boston, Massachusetts 01233

Dear Secretary Shor:

On behalf of the Towns of Ashland, Holliston, Medway, Millis, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), I would like to thank the Executive Office of Administration and Finance for allowing the four participating towns the opportunity to utilize electronic weights and measures inspections. With funding from the Patrick Administration's Community Innovation Challenge (CIC) grant program, the participating communities worked with MAPC to allow the four communities to provide weights and measures inspections as effectively and efficiently as possible. The local inspectors conduct inspections at local retail establishments that sell goods that are sold with a "price per quantity" model such as supermarkets using bar code pricing, deli scales, and gas stations. These local inspections protect consumers by checking that bar codes register to the correct price and the quantities are sold as advertised. One of the most visible inspections conducted are those at gas stations where measurements are taken to ensure that as a gallon is registered on the pump, a gallon of gas has entered the gas tank. Funds allowed for the purchase of software and hardware, which allowed the communities to save time in the preparation of required reports.

The use of electronic tools enhanced the ability of the inspectors to effectively manage data collected through the inspections, and to report inspection results quickly.

Paul G Boushell  
Municipal Services Coordinator  
MetroWest Regional Collaborative  
Ashland, Massachusetts 01721

## **Partner Communities**

The Towns of Ashland, Holliston Medway and Millis participated in this project. Ashland has the Town Manager form of government while Holliston, Medway, and Millis operate with a Town Administrator form of government. All four towns have an elected Board of Selectman with a Weights and Measures Inspector operating in each community. The towns of Ashland and Holliston share an inspector, as do Medway and Millis. Our communities have been involved in previous collaborative efforts with ways to examine regional services for food inspections and public health nursing for the past 4 years. These communities also worked together on regional public health emergency planning and the development of regional tobacco control initiatives. Communities in the MetroWest region continue to explore regionalization efforts across municipal departments.

Holliston served as fiduciary agent for the project and administered project funding and administrative obligations. Staff for the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (MWRC), a part of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) provided research, procurement and purchasing services, project coordination with vendors and communities and along with MAPC staff provided general oversight as well as project coordination. During the project, a number of meetings were held, and were attended by each community's Inspectors and staff from the MWRC.

## **Goal**

Through the use of CIC funding, the participating municipalities sought to provide efficiencies relative to the duties of local weights and measures inspectors.

## **Implementation Plan**

After receiving notification of the grant award, MWRC staff began informal research of electronic weights and measures inspections software and coordination with MIS staff and other State and local governments. MWRC staff researched various hardware options, with the ultimate goal being ease of use and durability. Portable printers will be utilized as well. By utilizing the Comm-PASS system (<http://www.comm-pass.com>) that provides local officials with pre-qualified vendors, the chosen software was delivered quickly. Nover Engelstein and Associates Inc. from New Jersey, provided the named software known as "WinWam" After being notified of their selection, a representative from WinWam began working with MWRC staff in order to ensure consistency and compatibility with State codes.

After purchasing hardware and software training was held for the local inspectors on April 2 & 3, 2014 at the Ashland Town Hall. Neal Nover from WinWam Software conducted the training sessions. Participating inspectors were given their new laptops that had the new inspectional software installed. Inspectors were introduced to each inspectional software module and given a chance to negotiate the contents of the software as it would be used in the field. Following training, each Inspector went back to their individual communities with laptops loaded with WinWam inspectional software, ready to begin utilizing the new technology. The Inspectors were encouraged to communicate any updates and information needs with the WinWam group. The use of the hardware and software decreased reporting time, but the data input and use of this new format will be time consuming, but the extra time needed will be far outweighed by the time saved in duplication and the tremendous data output that will be allowed by utilizing this electronic format both in the field and office.

### **Budget**

The budget for the project was the following:

Laptops (LENOVO E531)  $3 @ \$583.09 = \$1749.27$

Software System / Training / 3 Year License = \$ 14,406.0

Project Management (Research, Procurement, Coordination, Scheduling, Meetings & Report Writing, Follow Up) = \$4500.00

Total Budget = \$21,550.00

The project stayed within the original budget parameters. In order to purchase a more complete software package, monies were shifted out of the hardware category and moved into software. Project costs were manageable due to the research that was done before the grant proposal was submitted, and the use of the Comm-PASS System. The software and hardware were purchased jointly as was the licensing fees for the three years of operation. Training was conducted on a regional basis as well in order to save money and time. The MetroWest Regional Collaborative staff evaluated hardware needs based upon the inspectional software parameters. This research led to the configuration now utilized by the Inspectors. As more inspections are conducted in the field, the hardware will become easier for the inspectors to use, as was the case for the Health Inspectors.

### **Challenges and Solutions**

Ashland, Hopkinton and Medway have worked on regional projects relating to public health over the past four years. The relationships that have developed by staff members of the participating communities and the MWRC eliminated the challenges in working on a regional basis. The Weights and Measures Inspectors realized the benefits to their Towns and individual departments. In contrast to the Health Inspectors project, there was no need to coordinate with state officials to update codes etc.

## **Outcomes**

A more efficient weights and measures inspection process that is capable of collecting data during the inspection process and streamlining reporting to the State is one of the many beneficial outcomes. As time passes, the inspectors will become more familiar with the new software and hardware and therefore the inspection process itself will be completed efficiently and quicken. After the first year of inspections, database management, reporting will be easier and consume less time than current practices. Moving forward, Ashland and Medway are utilizing electronic food inspections as well as weights and measures inspections. These towns have taken advantage of the CIC grant program and have become leaders in moving forward using technology. A number of communities have made inquiries as to the use of electronic inspectional services with the intention of using this new technology.

An additional benefit of this software is that the results of local inspections may be posted on each community's web page, allowing citizens to view the results of inspections done at local establishments.

## **Executive Summary**

Having applied for and receiving a Community Innovation Challenge Grant from the Commonwealth's Department of Administration and Finance Department, the towns of Holliston, Ashland, Medway, and Millis are now conducting local weights and measures inspections electronically.

The local inspectors, having received training on how to utilize the new state of the art software, loaded on laptop computers, now conduct their inspections of scales in local stores, weights of goods as indicated on packaging, and similar inspections meant to protect consumers in a much more efficient manner than "paper and pen" methods. Because these inspection results are entered into the laptop and printed on a portable printer for establishment owners at the time of inspections, a great deal of time is saved. Data base management and reports are completed much faster than pen and paper forms.

This weights and measures project, much like the regions previous CIGG electronic food inspections project, has benefitted a number of communities in the MetroWest region. By participating in the grant program, these communities are now working more quickly and efficiently, which benefits local citizens, local communities, and the Commonwealth.

### **Contacts**

Paul Dell'Aquila, Executive Director, MetroWest Regional Collaborative,  
[pdellaquila@mapc.org](mailto:pdellaquila@mapc.org)

Paul Boushell, Municipal Service Coordinator, MetroWest Regional Collaborative,  
[pboushell@mapc.org](mailto:pboushell@mapc.org)

Mike Clancy, Medway & Millis Sealer of Weights and Measures, Medway MA,  
[mclancy@townofmedway.org](mailto:mclancy@townofmedway.org)

Jack Walsh, Sealer of Weights and Measures, Ashland MA, [jwalsh@ashlandmass.com](mailto:jwalsh@ashlandmass.com)

### **References**

Nover Engelstein and Associates Inc. from New Jersey, aka WinWam software

CDW Computer Hardware / Govern

### **Resources**

Scott Moytika, Ashland MIS Director, Ashland MA